MEPI in 2010— Apply for a Grant!

• Make this the year to become involved with your community…and MEPI activities!

• Details on how to apply can be found on page three or with your local MEPI committee.

Lebanese Youth Campaigning for Lowering the Voting Age

Shabab Al Balad Youth Parliament of Tripoli Lebanon implemented a MEPI–funded project entitled "Right to Vote: Political Electoral Law Reform and Youth Participation." The project increased awareness of democracy through debates particularly among youth. Discussion indicates youth's committment to increase their participation in the political process.

Shabab Al Balad, meaning "Youth of the Country", designed and implemented a campaign to adopt a new electoral law for lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. In so doing, Shabab Al Balad used a broad range of public education and lobbying techniques.

In the first stage, youth worked to gain support from different entities in Tripoli as well as outside Tripoli and lobbied to reform the electoral law. They were able to get in touch with
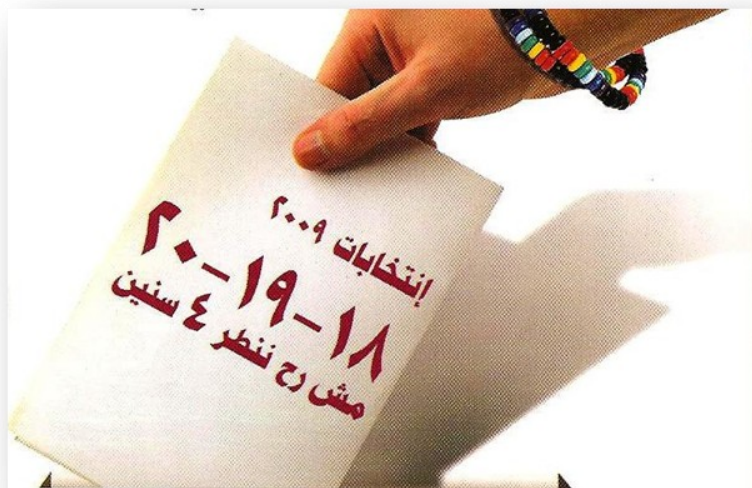
The campaign slogan :"We are not going to wait for four years"

different schools, colleges and universities as well as youth associations working on the same issue.

Through a series of awareness raising meetings with youth groups, Shabab Al Balad convinced their audience with the arguments for lowering the voting age.

The debate revealed the importance for young people to know and to expand their rights and responsibilities. Shabab Al Balad argued that the Lebanese constitution holds youth responsible for their actions at the age of 18, and that Lebanese youth have the right to work in the public sector starting at the age of 18, so as a result, youth should have the right to vote at age 18.

Training Moroccan Journalists on New Media

MIT Media is organizing a series of training sessions on e-journalism and new media targeting more than 200 Moroccan journalists from ten cities in Morocco: Ifrane, Fès, Oujda, Nador, Marrakech, Agadir, Tétouan, Errachidia, Casablanca and Rabat. The training sessions are part of the MEPI-funded project "Training the Trainers on E-journalism and New Media".

An e-journalism training session

The new media training sessions focused on creating and monitoring blogs, podcasting, research tools on the Internet, drafting for the Internet, and publishing multi-media content.

A training session on e-journalism for Moroccan journalists

"I discovered new tools and I will be able to better manage my research in the Internet" said Fatmazahra Benchrif, a journalist. Trained journalists expressed their interest in such training sessions. "This training session has opened my eyes, and I know that henceforth, I will work differently", said, Mokhtar Ghaliani, a journalist. Mounir Elktaoui stated that "This training session helped promote digital literacy among Moroccan journalists."

The "Training the Trainers on E-journalism and New Media"

project is seeking to further promote the role of the Moroccan media in expanding grassroots democracy by exposing journalists to new forms of journalism and communications, enabling them to disseminate information to a widespread audience and assisting them to play an increasing role encouraging good governance practices. "The project aims also to pave the ground for journalists and to enhance their coverage with multimedia products; prepare them to duplicate this experience; and implement what they have learned in their workplaces" stated Rachid Jankari, the project implementer.

Fore more see: http://www.youtube.com/ejournalisme.■

We Welcome a New Member to RO Tunis

The MEPI Regional Office in Tunis is very pleased to welcome our new colleague Amira Labidi as Administrative Assistant.

Amira joined MEPI from the Financial Management Office in the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, where she was the office manager for more than five years. Prior this, Amira worked in the oil industry for 11 years and she worked and lived in Dakar Senegal for three years.

Amira graduated from Bourguiba School in 1992, when she earned a combined

A warm welcome to Amira

bachelor's degree in Italian and English. ■

Making a Budget

By MEPI Grants Unit

'How will the project use funds?' and 'How will money be used to achieve the outcome and objectives of the project?" When answering these questions, you are taking the first steps to prepare a **Budget**.

The US Department of State Middle East Partnership Initiative provides funding generated from money Americans pay in taxes which is subject to stringent scrutiny. Happily, if you adhere to the MEPI guidelines, as many implementers can attest, MEPI funding is available for you.

The MEPI Regional Offices Grant Administrators will assist you with your budget. Please keep in mind the following when preparing a budget for a MEPI funded project:

- A well presented budget should be self explanatory without side commentary and avoiding follow up questions. Clearly show how sums were derived. Provide all the information so the reviewer can assess the reasonability of costs.
- Keep to the prescribed budget categories.
- Do not put activities as budget line (e.g. awareness campaign). Rather try do describe the goods or services that you will purchase (e.g. Design of poster, Printing of posters.)
- Use the MEPI formatted budget template attached to the application forms.
- Cost items should be apparent and readily linked to the object of the project.
- Be consistent with the narrative description of activities - all budget lines should be **linked to project activities.**
- All expenses should be reasonable and comparable to local market costs.
- Use specific budget entries and avoid vague terms (e.g. miscellaneous). Vagueness will invariably result in questions and slow down the process.
- Include cost-share information to the extent possible. We want to see you have a stake or contribution in the project - financial and or in-kind - in the project.
- Double-check formulas and calculations!

The standard budget categories are as follows:

- **Personnel** – Project staff salaries and wages
- **Fringe** – Employee benefits – Leave, health insurance, retirement insurance, taxes, etc. that are standard to your organization.
- **Travel** – Airfare, car rental, taxis, bus taxis, visas, hotels, per diems….
- **Equipment** – Tangible, non-expendable, personal property having a useful life of more that one year and a cost of $5,000 or more per unit. **Equipment is not funded through the MEPI Local Grant Program.**
- **Supplies** – Personal computers, telephones, fax machines, office supplies, etc.
- **Contractual** – Expenses related to sub-awardees, consultant fees, website development
- **Constructions** – Land and buildings costs. Constructions are not funded through the MEPI Local Grant Program.
- **Other Direct Costs** – These are other cost that are not included in the above categories e.g. rent, telephone/communications charges etc.
- **Total Direct Cost** – This is the sum of all the previous categories.
- **Indirect Costs** – This is only used when the applicant has an approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from a U.S. government agency. ■

Lebanese Youth Campaigning for Lowering the Voting Age

Shabab Al Balad succeeded in raising awareness on lowering the voting age. In fact, 91% of the young voters stated they supported this change.

Eighty volunteers aged between 16 and 25 responded to Shabab Al Balad's call to advocate for lowering the voting age in Lebanon by joining the association.

As a result, volunteers formed youth committees in neighborhoods and villages which facilitated networking and helped gain more support for the project. The volunteers were delighted to advocate and motivate their friends. They undertook several initiatives such as going into schools and colleges organizing meetings and distributing flyers and badges to students. They also visited coffee shops and internet cafés and talked to people about the project at school and created groups on Facebook to galvanize and sustain a network of supporters. In total, 7000 brochures were distributed to students aged 18 to 21 years old and 1000 posters were distributed in different cities in Lebanon especially in the North.

Shabab Al Balad, their volunteers and supporters held meetings with Municipal leaders, University and colleges authorities to develop awareness and increase knowledge about their
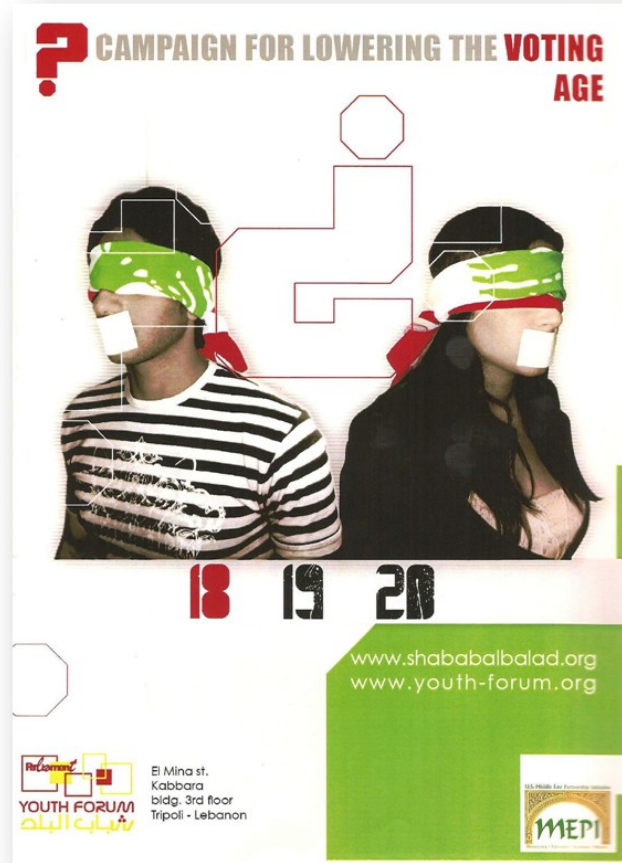
initiative. In total, more than 40 associations were involved as supporters of the goal.

Shadow Election

In order to give more consistency to the project, Shabab Al Balad carried out a shadow election for youth aged 18, 19 and 20 who currently do not enjoy the right of vote. The

municipality of Tripoli helped by supplying touch screens to be used in voting. The election process was fully computerized. Shabab Al Balad worked in attracting youth to the cause by letting them vote the same day of the state elections.

Meeting with MPs

Following the first phase of the campaign which consisted of a campaign raising awareness on the issues and after gaining supporters Shabab Al Balad started the second phase of the project by holding a series of meetings with MPs, politicians and also religious leaders to lobby to lower the voting age. Along with supporters, Shabab Al Balad signed a petition gathering around 9700 signatures demanding a change to voting laws . Shabab Al Balad presented the petition to Tripoli Parliament members to support the cause.
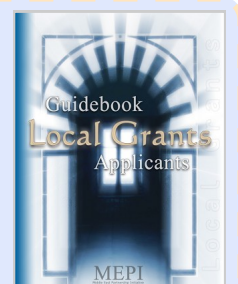
MP's signed the petition in favor of lowering the voting age, in which they committed to working for the participation of 18, 19, and 20 year olds in the coming municipal elections in 2010. The amendment law will be put into for the 2013 parliament elections.

The "Right to Vote: Political Electoral Law, Reform and Youth Participation" project received extensive press coverage in the Lebanese media.■

Meeting with MP's

Responsible Citizenship: Planning Engagement in Local Communities

In cooperation with the United Nations Development Program-Information and Communication Technology for the Development of the Arab Region (UNDP-ICTIDAR), the Arab Foundation for Development and Citizenship (AFDC) held a MEPI-funded workshop, in Tunisia, on the concept of "responsible citizenship." The workshop comes as a part of the AFDC's comprehensive project entitled "Promoting Citizenship to engage Arab Youth". This project is being implemented in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon and Tunisia targeting 200 Arab youth to spread a culture of responsible citizenship among them through trainings and engagement in relevant follow-up projects at the local level.

The three-day workshop held in Tunisia in February 2010 was attended by 45 Tunisian men and women. Participants, reviewed the International Declaration for Human Rights, civil rights charters and the United Nations declarations about Millennium goals.

Trainees presented suggestions of initiatives and sub-projects that they can implement in their local communities. For the rest stage AFDC hopes to help implement some of these proposals.

"These workshops make themselves distinct because they get participants actively involved in the learning process ", said Mr. Elias El Zin, AFDC's coordinator. AFDC previously trained 40 Tunisians in December 2009. ■

Participants in the workshop training on the responsible citizenship

The Arab Foundation for Development and Citizenship (AFDC) seeks to promote the concept of citizenship, by promoting the values of human rights and democracy in the Arab World.

The United Nations Development Program—Information and Communication Technology for Development of Arab Region (UNDP–ICTIDAR) relies on a strategic approach to implement the ongoing projects in the region. It realizes the vision of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which set clear targets for reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women by 2015.

For more details about the ADFDC and the UNDP-ICTIDAR please visit.
www.arabfdc.org
www.ictdar.org

Middle East Partnership Initiative

MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, the MEPI Regional Office administers MEPI local programs in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordon, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and West Bank/Gaza, and accounts for more than $5 million in program funding in the coming year. In addition to coordinating with U.S. Embassies throughout the region, the Tunis RO organizes conferences (such as the Business Women's Summit and Student Leaders Alumni Conference), facilitates exchange programs (such as the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program and the Students Leaders program), and provides a variety of funding opportunities (such as the MEPI Local Grants program and Civil Society Grants), as well as supporting visits, seminars, and training programs designed to advance reform.

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